

# Affective Aspirations of Activist Musical Diplomacy at the Bicentennial Celebration of Brazilian Independence in Lisbon

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## Abstract

In 2022, Prime Minister of Portugal António Costa of the Socialist Party held a celebration of Brazilian music at his residence in Lisbon for the Bicentennial of Brazilian Independence a month before the presidential elections between Bolsonaro and Lula. In contrast to Bolsonaro's right-wing rallies, Costa featured acts that were feminist, antiracist, and leftist. In this diplomatic event, musical performances criticised Bolsonaro's Brazil and supported Lula's campaign, imaginatively aspiring for an alternative Brazil despite the organizers' directive not to protest. I show how the performers strategically and affectively advanced a comprehensible political critique in this crucial moment of Brazilian political history.

## Resumo

Em 2022, o primeiro-ministro português, António Costa do Partido Socialista, realizou uma celebração da música brasileira na sua residência em Lisboa no âmbito do Bicenário da Independência do Brasil, um mês antes das eleições presidenciais entre Bolsonaro e Lula. Em contraste com os comícios de direita de Bolsonaro, Costa apresentou atos feministas e anti-racistas de esquerda. Nesse evento diplomático, as performances musicais criticaram o Brasil de Bolsonaro e apoiaram a campanha de Lula, aspirando de forma imaginativa por um Brasil alternativo, apesar do pedido do evento para que não se manifestassem. Mostro como os músicos estrategicamente e afetivamente avançaram uma crítica política compreensível neste momento crucial da história política do Brasil.

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## INTRODUCTION

On 10 September 2022, Prime Minister of Portugal António Costa hosted a celebration of the Bicentennial of Brazilian Independence at his official residence featuring a variety of Brazilian musicians who live in Lisbon. In this event of mostly “public diplomacy” (Gregory 2011) between state and nonstate actors, but which also included the Brazilian ambassador, Costa cited festivity as a crucial element to mark the occasion. He proclaimed that “there are many ways to celebrate 200 years of Brazilian Independence—solemn, official events, and symbolic acts. But there was one way that could not be missed, and that is to celebrate with the Brazilian community in Portugal.”

The event could be simply considered as creating a space of musical diplomacy that aimed to strengthen ties between Costa’s government and the Brazilian community in Portugal through mobilizing “music’s inherent capacity to model international dialogue by creating emotional elective affinities through nonverbal means” (Ahrendt, Ferraguto, and Mahier 2014:2). Music in diplomacy often “serves as a neutral space, a common ground, and a shared language” (9), “soft power” that stands “outside politics” in diplomatic negotiation and behind which “real politics” is done (9). As was proclaimed in the discursive acts of the event that hailed the importance of the Brazilian community in Portugal, one could, at a surface level, understand the celebration as simply seeking to accomplish the diplomatic goal of a relatively apolitical recognition of Portugal’s Brazilian community as part of an increasingly multicultural nation.

This, however, was not how the event was understood by anyone who attended it. The context hanging over this celebration was the Bicentennial celebration in Brazil that had been politicised by far-right President Bolsonaro’s reelection campaign, which he would lose the following month to leftist Workers Party candidate Lula da Silva. Paulo Ortemberg writes that the commemoration in Brazil “was a strange liminal celebration, engulfed directly by the immediate past and future” (2022:2).<sup>1</sup> At the celebration in Lisbon, music was obliquely and at times explicitly mobilised to assert a critical view of Bolsonaro and an aspirational message of support for Lula, as well as of their respective political visions. In contrast to Bolsonaro’s nationalist and militaristic rallies, Costa, head of Portugal’s Socialist Party, held a differently politicised event with a program of musical acts that were feminist, antiracist, leftist, and often explicitly pro-Lula, and the event was broadly understood as such. Indeed, as one Tweet response published by the media company *SIC* read, “it looks like more of a Socialist Party rally for Lula.” Claudio Nascimento, bassist for Afro-Brazilian trans performer Puta da Silva who closed the event, called the entire celebration an act of provocation on the part of Costa aimed at Bolsonaro and his followers. In this respect, the event deployed musical diplomacy not as a neutral means of bonding but as a “space to imagine political change and conceive social alternatives” (ibid.:6).

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1. All translations of texts and interviews originally not in English are my own.

Importantly, Costa, in his speeches at the event, never explicitly named either candidate. It was instead through music more than political discourse that a more explicitly political, pro-Lula vision was put forward at Costa's Bicentennial celebrations. However, despite the programming of groups that were generally explicitly aligned with leftist values and often Lula's campaign as well, performers navigated an ambiguous directive requested by the Prime Minister's Office of Events that the event be a celebration and *not* a protest. Yet, this directive was broadly interpreted by the artists not so much as censorship, but rather as an opportunity to express these values in more subtle and coded ways. It was apparent to me that few in attendance, including Costa, failed to understand these performances as a manifestation of an alternative Bicentennial celebration with values diametrically opposed to those expressed in Bolsonaro's events.

This article examines the affective uses of music to criticise Bolsonaro and support Lula at Costa's celebration of the Bicentennial of Brazilian Independence, as the artists engaged in an act of activist and aspirational musical diplomacy at a crucial moment in Brazilian history. Drawing on Ana Hofman (2015), I suggest that these affective feelings are inseparable from semiotic frameworks—such as lyrics, musical references, chants, and other codes—but that it is important to understand how these frameworks are mobilised by the affects of music as distinct from more clearly discursive events, such as Costa's relatively apolitical speech at the Bicentennial. Hofman argues that “the affective turn's productive potential does not lie in abandoning the semiotic, representational and discursive paradigms, but in the production of meeting points for the semantic and affective dimensions/venues at the site of the sound experience” (48). I further suggest that it is this connection to the semiotic that affords music's political efficacy, drawing on Desai-Stephens and Reissour's argument that “music—as a medium in which the affective register is central—is a particularly effective site for the construction, implementation and animation of political projects and ideologies” (2020:104). Moreover, despite the often explicit political statements made through music, in this case it was through musical affect that the event was able to be political without necessarily *feeling* like a protest, thus (somewhat) adhering to the Office of Event's wishes and maintaining the event's appearance as diplomatic through a cloak of festivity. In all this, we see the delicate managing and criticism of Luso-Brazilian relations and the broader diplomatic framework of *lusofonia* at a time when the Brazilian government had gone rogue.<sup>2</sup>

The article explores how these critiques were manifested in the curation of musical acts and their performance, drawing on participant-observation at the event and

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2. Lusofonia has been the transnational framework celebrating the cultural, historical, and political traits supposedly shared by Portuguese speakers around the world as advanced by the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Nations (CPLP), founded in 1996. The institution and its discourses have primarily represented the diplomatic effort of Portugal to maintain ties with ex-colonial nations and has less prominence in Brazil (Freixo 2010). For more on lusofonia and Luso-Brazilian political and cultural relations, see Miguel Vale de Almeida's application of postcolonial theory to the Portuguese colonial case (2002); Bastos, Almeida, and Feldman-Bianco (2002); Silva et al. (2015); Vanspauwen (2016) and Cidra (2022) on music.

interviews conducted afterward. I first provide background on Brazilian Independence, its ritualization, and its politicization by Bolsonaro on the occasion of the Bicentennial, as well as context regarding party politics in Portugal and Brazilian migration to Portugal. Turning to an overview of the event, I explore the act of curating an alternative Bicentennial in Lisbon and then focus on the creative strategies of critique used in the performances of the feminist carnival collective *Colombina Clandestina* and Afrodescendent trans performer Puta da Silva. Though I am not Brazilian, but rather US American, I am a participant in several of Lisbon's street carnival groups, including *Colombina Clandestina* with whom I performed at this event.<sup>3</sup>

### BRAZILIAN INDEPENDENCE AND ITS RITUALIZATION IN AUTHORITARIAN TIMES

Paulo Ortemberg argues that “a national holiday usually refers more to a preceding celebration of the holiday than to the commemorated event” (2022:2). On the occasion of Independence Day in 2021, the year before the Bicentennial, far from using the occasion to call for national unity during the pandemic, Bolsonaro had attacked the institutions of Brazilian democracy in front of a sea of his supporters dressed in the national colours of green and yellow that had come to be viewed as synonymous with the right wing. It was one of many occasions that was feared as an opportunity for the execution of a coup in collaboration with the country's armed forces. Ortemberg reports that in 2022 on the occasion of the Bicentennial, Bolsonaro similarly embraced a “martial cult, a discourse of good against evil, anti-abortion and anti-‘gender ideology,’ attacks on the critical press, celebration of the business and rural elite, and overwhelming machismo. I was impressed by the complete conversion of September 7 into a campaign act of an anti-democratic president with many supporters in the streets” (2022:4).

The Bicentennial unfolded during the presidential match between Bolsonaro and Lula in 2022, which was the outcome of a decade of deep polarization in Brazilian politics. Lula had first ascended to the Brazilian presidency in 2002, winning as an avowed socialist, union leader, and head of the Workers Party he had founded. Benefitting from an expanding economy, his rule was met with 87 percent approval in 2010, but his handpicked successor, Dilma Rousseff, met a fall in support as the global economic crisis that began in 2008 hit Brazil in 2012. Economic crisis and corruption scandals created the conditions for a successful impeachment campaign, what many call a coup, that brought her right-wing Vice President Temer to power in 2016.

This turn to the right, combined with the global elevation of right-wing populism represented by Donald Trump's win in the United States, created the conditions

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3. This article is part of a larger ongoing project about Lisbon's Brazilian carnival, which emerges from previous fieldwork conducted in Rio de Janeiro that culminated in the monograph *Critical Brass: Street Carnival and Musical Activism in Olympic Rio de Janeiro* (Snyder 2022).

for the much more authoritarian “Trump of the Tropics” Jair Bolsonaro to win in 2018. Bolsonaro’s campaigns and rule were marked by resentment and threats toward the left; denigration of women, LGBTQ+, Black, and indigenous people; exploitation of natural resources; romanticizing of Brazil’s military dictatorship (1964–85); blatant disregard for human life during the pandemic; and threats to democratic institutions that culminated in the mob attack on the capitol on 8 January 2023, inspired by the Trumpist attack on the American capital. In an election that to many represented the survival of Brazilian democracy, Bolsonaro only narrowly lost to Lula on 30 October 2022, and Brazil’s democratic future remains far from certain. In this context, Bolsonaro’s self-aggrandizing use of the Bicentennial became the hegemonic meaning of the celebration.

Brazil’s ritual of Independence from Portugal commemorates a unique story, one that has given Portugal a continuing role in Brazil’s commemorations. Napoleon’s invasion of the Iberian peninsula in 1807 and the Peninsular Wars that followed destabilised the monarchies of Portugal and Spain, eventually leading to the independence of most of their colonial holdings in the Americas. In the case of Portugal, the Portuguese royal court fled from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro, making the Brazilian city the only city in the Americas to have been the capital of a European country. In 1815, Brazil was transformed into a kingdom alongside Portugal through the creation of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil, and the Algarve. In 1821, King Dom João VI returned to Lisbon following the Liberal Revolution of 1820 in Portugal, which imposed a constitutional monarchy, and he left his son Dom Pedro as Prince Regent of Brazil. In an affront to Brazil’s emerging autonomy, the revolution had also demanded that Lisbon regain its centrality as seat of the monarchy, Portugal’s exclusivity to Brazilian trade which reasserted the status of Brazil as a colony, and the return to Portugal of Dom Pedro.

These indignities to the increasingly independent political and economic forces in Rio de Janeiro culminated in Dom Pedro’s declaration of Brazilian Independence in the Cry of Ipiranga on 7 September 1822, the date that has since been commemorated as Brazilian independence. The Prince Regent was thus declared Dom Pedro I, Emperor of Brazil, and eventually consolidated the Brazilian territory from Portuguese forces. Yet despite ending Portuguese rule in Brazil, Dom Pedro would also become a hero in Portuguese national lore as well. Due to the succession crisis created by the death of Dom João VI, he returned to Portugal, abdicating the Brazilian throne in 1832, to fight his brother Dom Miguel who sought to reimpose absolutism in Portugal in the War of the Two Brothers. Emerging victorious, Pedro I of Brazil is also remembered as Pedro IV of Portugal and is a figure that continues to bind the two postcolonial countries.

In the two hundred years that have passed, Dom Pedro’s binational legacy has continued to be invoked in the rituals of Brazilian independence. Janaina Cordeiro (2022) compares Brazil’s acts of national claims to the very body of Dom Pedro between the Sesquicentennial in 1972 and the Bicentennial in 2022, both of which, she writes, occurred in “authoritarian contexts.” The 1972 commemorations were celebrated during

Brazil's right-wing military dictatorship (1964–85), and the Brazilian government successfully requested from Portugal the permanent “repatriation” of the bodily remains of Dom Pedro. Cordeiro argues that through focusing on Dom Pedro, “the dictatorship sought to evoke a version of the past that valued the conquest of national independence from above, without popular revolutions or major ruptures, valuing the action of the strong man, the authority of the leader” (3).

Bolsonaro has often waxed nostalgic about the dictatorship, he famously dedicated his vote as a congressman for Rousseff's impeachment to her torturer during the dictatorship, and his supporters have often implored the military to overthrow democracy as they did in 1964. For the Bicentennial, Bolsonaro paid homage to the Sesquicentennial commemoration and its invocation of “revolution from above” by requesting a visit of the embalmed heart of Dom Pedro, which resides in Porto, Portugal. When Bolsonaro received the heart in Brasília, he proclaimed in front of the Portuguese authorities in attendance, “Two countries, united by history, connected by the heart. Two hundred years of Independence. Ahead, an eternity of freedom. God, fatherland, family! Long live Portugal, long live Brazil!” (4). As Cordeiro points out, Bolsonaro simultaneously invoked the Portuguese right-wing dictatorship under Salazar by citing its slogan of “God, fatherland, family.” The tone was thereby set for a Bicentennial that would celebrate authoritarian values in Brazil and beyond.

While Costa's celebrations would clearly be a subversion of Bolsonaro's, one could also see Bolsonaro's as already having subverted the meaning of the national ritual. Roberto DaMatta's structuralist theorization of rituals in Brazil portrays Independence celebrations as part of a “ritual triangle” of events that also includes carnival and Catholic processions, each one representing a different national authority: during Catholic Processions religion, during Independence Day the state, and during carnival the people. For DaMatta, these national events are “rites grounded in the possibility of dramatizing crucial, encompassing, global values of our society” during which “the whole society *should* be oriented toward the centralizing event” ([1979]1991:27). He contrasts Independence Day to carnival as structuralist mirror images. At Independence Day, the “focal point is a military parade” and “those who represent the juridical and political order of the nation” (35), manifesting official hierarchies and freezing in place the “social structure.” The people are spectators but are meant to feel included by the rites of “what is specifically ‘national Brazilian’: the national flag, the national colours, the national anthem, the supreme authorities of the nation” (46). Carnival, by contrast, is typified by the unofficial, subversive, inverting of social orders, participation of the people, referencing of other cultures, and obfuscation of quotidian roles.

DaMatta can be critiqued from a poststructuralist perspective for asserting a static model that is inapplicable in contemporary Brazil—for example, the country is increasingly evangelical Protestant and significantly less Catholic than when DaMatta was writing. But if we take DaMatta's portrayal of Independence Day rituals as an idealised form, Bolsonaro's promotion at Independence Day of his own electoral campaign, attacks on the left, threats toward the constitutional order, conflation of his government with the

state, and contempt at using the ritual for national unity is a notable departure from DaMatta's portrait. Ortemberg argues that the date was "kidnapped" (2022:7) by the government along with other national symbols such as the national flag and its colours. Lula had advised his supporters not to dispute the streets during the celebrations to avoid confrontation with Bolsonaristas, making the celebration exclusive of the majority who would eventually vote for Lula.

Further complicating DaMatta's structuralism, however, there have long been alternative national commemorations of Independence Day, what Ortemberg calls "contrasting narratives" (5). He notes that leftist movements have paraded since 1995 as the "Cry of the Excluded" in a counterpoint to the Cry of Ipiranga. Lula had addressed the nation in 2022 instead during the celebrations in the northeastern state of Bahia on 2 July, a more important date than 7 September in the region, which commemorates the triumph of Bahian forces over the Portuguese in the Independence War (Albuquerque 2022). In 2022 Brazil, a date that had been enshrined as a display of national unity had been fragmented by polarization from a national spectacle into rival rallies. In contrast to the uniformity of DaMatta's portrait, as Fernando Nicolazzi writes, "numerous independences circulated in Brazilian public space" during the Bicentennial (2022:1), of which Costa's party was one, albeit a diasporic one of postcolonial encounter in the very capital from which Brazil had declared independence.

## AN ALTERNATIVE BICENTENNIAL FOR BRAZILIAN MIGRANTS IN COSTA'S PORTUGAL

Costa's Bicentennial was above all aimed at a particular Brazilian migrant community in Portugal. There have long been migrations between Portugal and Brazil, but until the past few decades, the direction had mostly been from Portugal to Brazil. Brazilians began to migrate across the Atlantic due to Portugal's modernization and integration into Europe, arriving in Portugal in what França and Padilla (2018) describe as three "waves," eventually making Brazilians the largest national minority in Portugal. With the first wave initially made up of professionals beginning in the 1980s, the 1990s and 2000s saw a second wave of a more diverse range of migrants, which ended during the austerity crisis that began in 2008. By 2014, as the South American country had begun to experience economic and political crisis, a third wave took form as Portugal recuperated economically, including the demographics that made up the previous waves but also composed of more privileged sectors. These include educated professionals and rich entrepreneurs, some of whom are quite conservative, as well as a more left-wing cohort of relatively privileged migrants, including university students, artists, and intellectuals. It is that latter cohort that was both crucial to organizing the Bicentennial at Costa's residence and represented the event's primary audience.

António Costa represents an ascendancy of the centre-left in Portugal's post-austerity period during which this third wave has taken form. He came to power in 2015 in

a coalition government with the Portuguese Communist Party and the more modern Left Block Party, promising to roll back austerity measures and improve the material conditions of the Portuguese. Crucial to his strategy of economic rejuvenation has been embrace of an explicitly proimmigration platform, seeking to ease barriers to migrants of all classes and thereby compete for immigrant labour with other European countries that offer higher salaries. He often underlines his own origins in India—Costa’s father came to Portugal from the former colony of Goa,<sup>4</sup> now a state in southwestern India, and was a communist dissident during the Portuguese dictatorship. Though Portugal lagged behind the far-right’s exponential growth in other European countries in response to immigration, the country now has its own growing far-right, nationalist party, Chega, making Costa’s proimmigration platform all the more provocative. Costa and Bolsonaro represent, therefore, two distinct political visions in their respective countries, and the juxtaposition between the countries’ political situations in the late 2010s has been cited as a motivating factor for many of my Brazilian interlocutors in Lisbon who have feared the possibility of a return to dictatorship in their country. It is important to note that Costa is far from beloved by the far-left parties who withdrew their support in 2021, leading to snap elections that returned Costa with an absolute majority of his Socialist Party. At the time of writing, the cost of living crisis, worsened in Portugal by continually low wages by European standards and low availability of housing due to a tourism and expat influx boom he helped promote, represent major risks for Costa.

Despite the political stakes in Brazil, contestation was not the only option for Portuguese officials on this occasion of the Bicentennial, nor was it the only path taken. The president of Portugal, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa of the centre-right Social Democratic Party, in fact attended the Brazilian ceremonies in Brasília, seeking to maintain an apolitical posture more similar to the conciliatory attitude that had typified the converging diplomatic approaches between the two countries before Bolsonaro’s bellicosity entered the international arena. Embarrassingly, a picture circulated of the Portuguese President standing next to Bolsonaro who was holding a Brazilian flag in front of the two presidents with an unborn fetus inside the central circle, with “Brazil without abortion, Brazil without drugs” written instead of “Order and Progress.” Claiming not to have known what was in front of him, he argued that “Portugal has diplomatic relations with democracies and dictatorships” (Botelho 2022). These distinct diplomatic actions between the two Portuguese officials might be representative of the differing roles between the two positions in Portugal’s governmental system wherein the President, as the head of state, is a more neutral figurehead and diplomatic representative, while the Prime Minister, as the head of government, is also the head of a political party and shapes policy and coalitions.

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4. Costa’s father was born in the former Portuguese colony of Moçambique to a Goan father and French-descendant mother before spending his childhood and youth in Goa, thus representing the circulatory paths of many communities within the Portuguese colonial world.



## AN ACTIVIST CURATION

But we might also see Costa's alternative Bicentennial as the result of his own political commitments represented by the invitation to curate the event being extended to the Casa do Brasil (CBL) in particular. CBL is an association founded in 1992, the primary goal of which is to assist immigrants from all countries, but especially Lusophone migrants and more specifically Brazilians, and to petition the Portuguese government on behalf of them. The institution's founding members had originally campaigned for Lula during his earlier presidential bids in the 1990s (Feldman-Bianco 2001). CBL prioritises "activism and demands for egalitarian policies for immigrant communities in Portugal, promoting equal access to rights and services for immigrants ... and the appreciation of multiculturalism, interculturality and integration through culture."<sup>5</sup> During the last presidential campaign, CBL was unabashed in its support for Lula, though the association taking a stance on the presidential election was viewed as exceptional and the result of the election being viewed as between democracy and dictatorship. The association's website clearly defines the group as antiracist, antixenophobic, antisexist, and prorefugee, and it provides classes, workshops, and lectures in which these values are espoused and debated. CBL is, therefore, not simply a cultural space for the diasporic Brazilian community, but an activist organization mobilizing for immigrant rights, and it is an object of ire for right-wing Brazilian immigrants.

It is important, however, not to give too much credit to Costa here. CBL's Samara Azevedo, who ultimately organised the list of artists to be selected, is still unsure whether it was Costa himself who had suggested CBL. She described the representatives of the Prime Minister's Office of Events who met with CBL as initially unaware of the association's activities or political commitments: "They had no idea what the Casa do Brasil is.... They asked if we had a lot of samba parties.... They had a very colonialist idea of what a Brazilian space would represent" (Samara Azevedo, interview, 15 October 2022). According to Azevedo, the Office of Events approached CBL for this task instead of the Embassy of Brazil, which might more typically act as the representative for such an occasion, due to the Bolsonarista profile of the embassy. We can say, therefore, that, while it is unclear just how leftist Costa's event was intended to be in handing the reins to CBL, it was explicitly not aligned with Bolsonaro's events and broke with diplomatic tradition to demonstrate this lack of alliance.

From the state of Rio de Janeiro, Azevedo came to Lisbon in 2014 to pursue a master's degree, which culminated in a performance project about the seventeen Institutional Acts of Brazil's military dictatorship. She has continued with a PhD thesis focused on activist art and the Andorinha Collective: Democratic Brazilian Front of Lisbon of which she is a founding member. The collective was founded in 2017 as a response to the coup against Dilma Rousseff and is part of a broad left-wing mobilization that continued

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5. Casa do Brasil de Lisboa website: <https://casadobrasilde Lisboa.pt/> (accessed 7 July 2023).

after the coup to dispute the policies of Temer and then Bolsonaro. More recently, Azevedo was invited into the executive group of CBL as the association's secretary.

When the invitation to curate the event appeared, CBL debated whether to accept, as the progressive organization had many critiques of Costa's centre-left government. Ultimately, as Azevedo describes, they concluded that "there is no empty space, and if we don't occupy it, someone else will. They could have programmed *Bolsonaristas* to play there.... We will accept the invitation but make the situation clear to all the artists we suggest to Costa's office. From my point of view, we were not supporting Costa's government; it was a commemoration of an important date ... and the opportunity to do this in such an important space was unmissable." Given her artistic and political background, she led the process of indicating potential artists for Costa's Bicentennial. She made a list of artists

who thought about immigration and Brazil from the distance [of Portugal].... We could have recommended mainstream artists who live here, but we preferred to give voice to others. I initially thought we should create a program of only women, but we ended up blessing other projects as well such as *Gira*, the *roda de samba* of only women; *Colombina Clandestina*, which brings the political question of carnival; *Leo Middea* who composes songs about disillusionment with Europe; *Baque Mulher* who brings all-women *maracatu* [Afro-Brazilian percussion, vocal, and dance genre associated with carnival from Recife, Brazil]; the classes developed at CBL of *forró* [popular music and dance genre from northeastern Brazil] ... and *Putada Silva* who is a trans artist who sings about African culture and *orixás* [Afro-Brazilian spirit deities].... We didn't want covers; we wanted original creations ... because the exoticization of Brazilian culture is very strong here.

Starting with a list of thirty artist that she proposed to the Office of Events, she mentions here the six groups that were selected and available to be confirmed.

While it is unclear what the original political intents of the Office of Events were, Azevedo used the opportunity to highlight alternative projects in Lisbon's Brazilian musical scenes, the current presence of which is notable. Amanda Fernandes Guerreiro's PhD research on Brazilian music in Lisbon (2020) had shown how the Brazilian music scenes of the mid-2010s still primarily repackaged tropes of *brasilidade*, or iconic genres and images of Brazilianness. She notes in her conclusion that the increased migration of the middle classes and students in the mid-2010s had begun to diversify the musical offerings of the city, challenge stereotypical images of *brasilidade*, and promote an alternative musical scene in Lisbon that would provide the references for Azevedo's list. Though the promotional materials used, or reclaimed, the classic green and yellow of Brazil's flag that had been "kidnapped" by Bolsonaro and the right, the event would showcase an alternative Brazil reflective of emerging communities in Lisbon (Figure 1).

Whether or not Costa's office was familiar with CBL beforehand, they can still be credited with selecting and confirming from this list of thirty the six artists they chose, rather than balking at the array of leftist performers. Azevedo related surprise and

**Celebração  
do Bicentenário  
da Independência  
do Brasil**

**14h00** Abertura de portas  
**14h30** Colombina Clandestina  
**15h00** Oficina para crianças com Jaqueline Arashida  
**15h00** Concerto Leo Middea  
**15h30** Aula e baile de Forró pelo Espaço Baião  
**16h15** Gira Coletivo de Mulheres no Samba  
**17h00** Baque Mulher  
**17h30** Concerto Puta da Silva

**No jardim:**  
 Exposição “É fixe o que as pessoas  
 migrantes trazem na mala”

Sábado,  
10 de setembro '22

Residência Oficial  
do Primeiro-Ministro  
Rua da Imprensa à Estrela, 4  
1200-888 Lisboa

Entrada livre

Curadoria de  
 REPÚBLICA  
PORTUGUESA  
 CASA do  
BRASIL  
do Lisboa

Figure 1. Event program.

emotional fulfilment at the selection of Black trans artist Puta da Silva whom the Office of Events programmed as the performer to close the entire event. CBL had, in fact, been uncertain about suggesting Puta da Silva, in particular, because Azevedo “was worried about bringing people to endorse some discourse they don’t believe in, where they might be badly treated without dignity, or as an ornament.” Indeed, she described the artists as sceptical when they heard they were on the possible invitation list—“what do you mean, the Prime Minister?” Azevedo and the CBL team ultimately decided regarding Puta da Silva, “no, it is they [the Office of Events] that have to assume to the position of excluding her because they think they have to.” She was “surprised for the good ... to see how many political and critical artists were chosen.” Clearly, Azevedo viewed the act of curation as an opportunity to assert critical political opinions by highlighting projects that would be anathema to Bolsonaroistas even if they made no political statement whatsoever. Azevedo mused, “[E]ven making the Prime Minister pay immigrant artists was for me a political act.”

Nevertheless, Azevedo related that the Office of Events was worried about political protests, more than Costa she believed, and they requested that the artists “refrain from protest.” She explained to me, “[W]e said, ‘very well, don’t worry about it,’ as we will figure out a way for this to happen, and we will show our political opinions through artistic choices.” She passed this directive along to the artists: “[W]e are choosing artists that create political content, but we have the instructions that this is not a political event.... However you respond to this, I’m just telling you. I’m not contracting you—I’m not responsible for anything.” Despite this directive, she observed that “there were various kinds of protests. ... Politics was present everywhere in that space full of immigrants.”

## THE EVENT

Before the musical offerings started on the day of the event, I walked around the beautiful gardens. There were large prints of the exposition created for the occasion entitled “it’s awesome what immigrants bring in their suitcases,” featuring photos of Brazilians and words describing their careers, backgrounds, and passions. Visually, the stakes of Brazilian contributions to Portuguese society were put front and centre. On the suitcase belonging to the person of [Figure 2](#) is written “ancestral knowledge, drums, the Yorubá nation, flavors, Bahianity [the identity of the Afro-descendant dominant Brazilian state of Bahia], my Blackness.”

Early in the event, the guests gathered below the staircase leading to the entrance of Costa’s residence. First, Ana Paula Costa, Vice President of CBL and also a Black woman, rose to speak ([Figure 3](#)). Azevedo noticed that the Brazilian ambassador had been invited to the event and mentioned the symbolic importance of his presence below Paula Costa in particular, which she saw as a “demarcation of space, a political act.” Paula Costa declared, “Currently after 200 years, it’s still necessary to construct a Brazil for all people independent of race, gender, social conditions, religion, or nationality, and it’s still important to fortify our democracy that is currently so fragile.” While Bolsonaro was never named in her own or Costa’s speeches, like the physical position of her above the Brazilian ambassador, the prizing of an egalitarian Brazil and the critique of the state of democracy stand in stark juxtaposition to Bolsonaro’s discourse. She proclaimed the “right of all immigrants to integration and the need to combat racism, xenophobia, and all forms of discrimination in Brazil and Portugal.... We want to strengthen immigrants, especially those from ethnic and racial minorities.”

António Costa followed, and in his speech he mentioned the recent voyage of the heart of Dom Pedro to Brazil, an event viewed by many on the left as colonialist and reminiscent of the Brazilian dictatorship ([Figure 4](#)). But Costa resignified the literal meaning of the heart’s journey by declaring that “many more times has the heart of Dom Pedro travelled in the hearts of all of us through immigration” between both countries. He referenced the dictatorships in both countries, but, in contrast to Bolsonaro’s nostalgic pining for past authoritarianisms, he spoke of the Portuguese exiles who



Figure 2. One of the posters of the exposition. Photo by author, 10 September 2022.

took refuge from dictatorships in each other's countries. He spoke empathetically of migrants on both sides of the Atlantic: "It's not always easy to live in a land where you did not grow up." Noting the challenges that migrants face, including his own father who migrated from Goa, he declared that "Racism and xenophobia are words that are also said in our language of Portuguese." In the line that was repeated the most by the media, he promised to make Portugal the "house of all Brazilians who want to live here." Both Ana Paula Costa's and António Costa's speeches, in highlighting racism and xenophobia, depart from more uncritical and celebratory expressions of lusofonia in official discourse



Figure 3. Ana Paula Costa (centre left) next to António Costa (centre right). Photo by author, 10 September 2022.

between Portuguese-speaking nations.<sup>6</sup> For Azevedo, the speeches “demarcated the space,” “almost declaring” a denunciation of Bolsonaro by sheer juxtaposition of values between the two. In the context of a festive event, he notably celebrated “the beautiful musicality of Brazilian Portuguese of which we Portuguese are very envious.”

But beyond musical language, where here does music fall in all this? If the critiques of Bolsonaro and support for Lula were only obliquely positioned in these official discourses, as I have already gestured, they were *more* clearly signified by the musical performers. In some cases, dissidence was quite literal. Explicitly disobeying the request not to engage in political protest, Gira, the all-women samba group, chanted “down with Bolsonaro” (*fôra Bolsonaro*), prompting the crowd to launch into the familiar pro-Lula chant “Olé, Olé, Olé, Olé, Lula, Lula.” The group had gained some notoriety for rejecting such requests to tone down politics, as they had previously been asked by another event promoter not to chant “down with Bolsonaro,” and, instead of complying, they denounced those event organisers on Instagram (Figure 5). For Azevedo, in some of the

6. Lusofonia has been criticized for reiterating elements of the earlier framework of *lusotropicalismo* embraced by Vargas’s Brazil and Salazar’s Portugal, which had portrayed slavery, colonialism, and race relations as less violent and more intimate in the Portuguese-speaking world than the supposedly more brutal practices and polarized attitudes of North America and Northern Europe. See Cardina (2016) on the recent presence of lusotropicalist tropes in the discourses of Portuguese President Cavaco Silva (2006–16).



Figure 4. A Lula supporter listening to Costa's speech. Photo by author, 10 September 2022.

Bicentennial performances, no political content was needed to make a political point. Though Baque Mulher, for example, didn't make an explicit political statement, like Gira, the simple fact of women occupying traditionally male roles made a political point, in this case in playing the thunderous drums of maracatu. The forró class, where even the prime minister danced, "was a deconstruction of an extremely formal space, the house of one of the greatest authorities of the country.... It was a subversion of what that space is used for" (Figure 6). A workshop for children provided an opportunity that is usually neglected because, as Azevedo noted, "we neglect women and we neglect mothers" (Figure 7). Colombina Clandestina and Puta da Silva, however, made their politics explicit but in creative and coded ways, and it is to their performances that I now turn my attention.



Figure 5. All-women samba group Gira. Photo by author, 10 September 2022.

### **Colombina Clandestina: Playing between the Lines**

Colombina Clandestina, founded in 2016, is a *bloco* (a mobile, participatory musical ensemble associated with street carnival), and the group is a central part of Lisbon's Brazilian street carnival (*carnaval de rua*) that has emerged in the past several years. This street carnival is largely modelled on the alternative street carnival manifestations that take place alongside the more official samba schools in Rio and other Brazilian cities. These are events in which adopting a political posture has become increasingly common during the past polarised decade of Brazilian politics (see Snyder 2022). Colombina, combining samba percussion, horns dance, and vocals, is one of about fifteen blocos in Lisbon, and it





Figure 6. Prime Minister dancing forró. Photo by author, 10 September 2022.

is one of the oldest as well as the largest, having mobilised approximately twenty thousand revellers in its 2023 carnival parade.<sup>7</sup> The group had used CBL's facilities for classes and, according to Azevedo, was the only group for which Costa's Office of Events had expressed specific interest.

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7. See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRGFkfhg2Ho&ab\\_channel=ColombinaClandestina](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRGFkfhg2Ho&ab_channel=ColombinaClandestina) (accessed 7 July 2023).



Figure 7. Workshop area for children. Photo by author, 10 September 2022.

Colombina is also the most openly political of Lisbon's blocos, listing in its public materials and reinforcing through performance its three main political pillars of feminism, diversity, and public space. The bloco's leader, Andréa Freire, had come to Lisbon in 2016 for a graduate program in Communication and Trends, eventually completing a master's degree in Culture and Communication at the University of Lisbon, a program in which students are encouraged to think about the dissemination of culture strategically. Along with two other students, the vision for Colombina emerged as a project for a class assignment, and the three defined the political pillars of the project from the beginning since "we started in academia, and we had to formulate what this bloco was about" (Andréa Freire, interview, 5 October 2022). For Freire, beyond promoting Lula and denouncing Bolsonaro, the objective on the occasion of the Bicentennial was to provoke thought about the

decolonial question.... Since this was on the occasion of the Bicentennial and all this heart business. Who is commemorating, what are we commemorating, and why are we commemorating?... We weren't there for entertainment nor for protest. So how can I manage to position myself and maintain my values inside the house of the Prime Minister? I think it was an open space for this end.... And we took this moment to say, "look, two hundred years passed, but we are living this now." Brazil is living in a dictatorship, repeating itself.



Figure 8. Colombina Clandestina. Photo by Raquel Pimentel, 10 September 2022.

This message was also highlighted in her communication to the bloco about the event. Freire took the occasion to write to the musicians a statement that similarly rejected the request not to make political statements: “Neutrality is soap for babies. The concept for this performance will be centred on the future that we want ... in this pre-election moment.... Colombina is a project that acts to decolonise collective thought about our bodies, especially those of immigrants.”

Our short performance opening the event included the bloco’s anthem based on a marchinha (carnival march rhythm) and two popular songs associated with 1960s resistance to the Brazilian dictatorship, the melodies of all of which were played by brass accompanied by percussion as we marched through the grounds (Figure 8). The lyrics of the carnival march make the bloco’s progressive intents clear: “I am Colombina and I’m stronger than ever. I’ve broken borders to show my ideals. Born of feminine force, Clandestina, I am the voice of carnival.” The words were not sung, however, as the melody was played by horns, making the meaning known only to those present who followed the group or viewed the performance posted later on social media.<sup>8</sup>

We next launched into Chico Buarque’s 1970 classic samba “Apesar de Você” (In spite of you), singing the opening line “Amanhá vai ser outro dia” (Tomorrow will be another day). The crowd began to sing along in recognition of the line, and an audience

8. See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZpdtusFxX4&ab\\_channel=ColombinaClandestina](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZpdtusFxX4&ab_channel=ColombinaClandestina) (accessed 7 July 2023). Performed at the Bicentennial: [https://www.instagram.com/reel/CiXl9bJAPR0/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link&igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==](https://www.instagram.com/reel/CiXl9bJAPR0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==) (accessed 7 July 2023).

member shouted out, “Brazil is going to change.” Buarque sought to skirt the dictatorship’s censorship of subversive music through veiled critique though the song was eventually banned. He described a longing for a tomorrow free of oppression without naming the dictatorship but rather singing in the language of a rejected suitor. The song’s significance in 2022 was clearly understood by the Bicentennial audience members, many of whom flashed the “L” for Lula with their thumb perpendicular to their index finger upon hearing the subversive anthem.

Colombina’s final song, Caetano Veloso’s 1967 “Alegria, Alegria,” has a more ambiguous status as a protest anthem. Portraying the reflections of the singer walking aimlessly through a major Brazilian city, it is a postmodern juxtaposition of contrasting images, from the president’s face, guerrillas, and spaceships, capturing what Christopher Dunn calls the “confusing, fragmented reality of a modern Brazilian city” (2001:66). In contrast to protest anthems like “Apesar de Você” to which young leftist listeners of the day were accustomed, the song does not engage in clear critique of the regime. Rather, it embraces a nihilistic, and even hedonistic, affirmation of absurdity with its final lines: “I want to go on living, my love. I will. Why not, why not, why not, why not?” The song was initially booed when it debuted at the festival that was the breeding ground of the leftist popular song movement, specifically because it used electric guitar, which was viewed as an imperialist American influence. The disinterest in the lyrics for any kind of discipline, left or right, made Veloso an enemy of both the dictatorship that exiled him in 1968 and initially the revolutionary left as well. Veloso’s rejection of the contemporary politics of indignation marked the birth of the distinct counterculture movement of *tropicália*.

Despite the song’s ambivalent politics and initial controversy, however, Veloso and the *tropicália* movement are now remembered as the iconic expression of 1960 and 1970s Brazilian counterculture and as equally part of the canon of protest repertoires. However, in Colombina’s rendition of the song, the iconic “why not?” (*porque não?*), expressing an absurdist embrace of life despite the dictatorship, was changed to the more denunciatory chant of “*ele não*,” or “not him,” the “him” referring to Jair Bolsonaro. “*Ele não*” was the chant of Brazilian feminist protests during the presidential election of 2018. At the prime minister’s residence, the crowd began singing along, repeating the line until it died out and was replaced with applause.

The choice to cover Buarque and Veloso bespeaks the continuing reverberance of the protest music of the 1960s and 1970s as classic references for contemporary protest in Brazil. Through these songs, Colombina made an unsubtle conflation, for those who recognised the references, between Brazil’s past experience of dictatorship and the present danger of dictatorship-nostalgic Bolsonaro. The bloc’s performance made musically clear what was unsaid but implicit in Costa’s speech—that the event militates for an alternative Brazil than that of Bolsonaro, a different tomorrow. And for those truly in the know, the t-shirts made for the event by Brazilian immigrant artist Eloiza Montanha had the number 12727 printed on them, the mugshot number of Lula when he was imprisoned by the dictatorship (Figure 9). The group disobeyed the directive not to protest but nonetheless



Figure 9. Shirts made for the event by Eloiza Montanha. Photo by Raquel Pimentel, 10 September 2022.

kept this message, as Freire explained, “between the lines.... The message was there. The way that each person understood it was left to them. Even though we participate in a lot of protests, we understood that this was not a protest, but we can still espouse a position artistically.”

### **Putá da Silva: Faking It**

Putá da Silva is the stage name of Waquila da Silva, an Afro-Brazilian, immigrant, trans artist, whose performance closed the entire event. Her band is composed of majority Black musicians, playing Afro-Brazilian candomblé percussion, guitar, bass, and saxophone. The band supports Putá da Silva’s aggressive vocal style that moves between singing and rap, and it mixes the live instruments with the electronic sounds of Carioca funk, the music of Rio de Janeiro’s favelas. She had collaborated with Colombina Clandestina in their

original protest song “Histérica e Louca” (Hysterical and Crazy), launched in the previous carnival of 2022.<sup>9</sup>

Putada da Silva had lived in Lisbon for seven years and completed two master’s degrees focused especially on the theatre and cinema. At a certain point in her life in Lisbon, she confronted financial problems and used prostitution to support herself. These experiences of prostitution and being in street are the thematic foundations for her persona as Puta (“prostitute”) da Silva. Claudio Nascimento, the band’s bassist who had arrived in Lisbon from Recife, Brazil, in 2019 to pursue a master’s degree in ethnomusicology, explains, “she always says in the show, ‘they threw me in the street, it was the street that made me, it was prostitution that saved me,’ as if it were something good.... She speaks with pride, something not everyone has the courage to do so” (Claudio Nascimento, interview, 27 November 2022).

The group made a professional video of the concert at Costa’s residence called “Pontos da Rua” (Street Points),<sup>10</sup> and the video opens with a voice speaking to Putada da Silva with contempt as she is being thrown into the street: “Time to gather your things and leave. Your death was inevitable. I’m not to blame for your misfortunes.... Now go to the streets.” The camera slowly comes into focus over this speech onto Putada da Silva’s body lying on the stylised images of Lisbon’s Portuguese sidewalks. The video follows with Putada da Silva’s speech in which her voice reclaims the street over images of the group’s massive concerts: “It was the street that made me, the same street on which you passed me by.”

Then, a strong juxtaposition is made in the video as we see the back of Putada da Silva inside the Prime Minister’s house with “Official Residence of the Prime Minister of Portugal” written on the screen, where she appears to play with a classic opposition between street and home in Brazilian society. For DaMatta, “the ‘street’ (a rua, meaning the impersonal world)” is “opposed to ‘home’ (a casa, which represents the personal universe)” ([1971]1991:68). He argues that ritual events can involve a process of “symbolic dislocation,” “or passage of some element from one domain to another” (35). In this sense, we might see Putada da Silva as bringing the sociality and politics of the street to occupy the space of the Prime Minister’s home just as Colombina had brought street carnival, both producing rare confrontations between the symbolic universes.

Nascimento interprets the performance as a “salutation to the people of the street, to the gypsies, the scoundrels, and the drunks.” During the performance, a Black man acts as various characters who portray the themes of the songs, generally representing, as Nascimento explains, the “people of the street interacting with the band and the audience as well as Putada da Silva herself. When she speaks of being thrown out on the street, he enters on the stage with a suitcase.” During a song that references the notorious distaste for labour of the *malandro* (a male Brazilian persona associated with Rio’s Black

9. See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DVQrh\\_kqJA&ab\\_channel=ColombinaClandestina-Topic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DVQrh_kqJA&ab_channel=ColombinaClandestina-Topic) (accessed 7 July 2023).

10. See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVyC3bqcxHA&ab\\_channel=PutadaSilva](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVyC3bqcxHA&ab_channel=PutadaSilva) (accessed 7 July 2023).



Figure 10. Performance of Puta da Silva (centre), screenshot of video of performance, *Pontos da Rua*.

bohemian lifestyle and the emergence of samba), he dances samba in the characteristic *malandro* costume while she sings, “Work, work for what? If I work I will die” (Figure 10).

In her performance of “Samba do Cais” at the event, Puta da Silva draws a map of Lisbon through song that highlights the existence of Black people and immigrants in the city. As she goes through various neighbourhoods, she smokes “hash with my [Arab] cousin” and eats Cape Verdian “cachupa with my aunt.” She describes the trainline from Sintra to Rossio that brings Black people to work in the city centre, and she sings of Black people disappeared and killed by the police in Lisbon and the interrogation room where immigrants are questioned and told to “go back to their homelands.” On top of this marginalised Lisbon, she critiques the gentrification and touristification of the city, notably a process that Costa had a crucial role in fomenting first as Mayor of Lisbon and then as Prime Minister.

Puta da Silva’s performance of “Mãe Preta” (Black Mother) at the event could be interpreted as a decolonization of a Portuguese appropriation of Afro-Brazilian culture. The original song, sung by the Brazilian Maria da Conceição, depicts an enslaved Black mother caring for the White child of her master while her husband is brutalised. The song was censored, but the melody was set to new words and popularised as a Portuguese *fado* by Portugal’s most famous singer, Amália Rodrigues, as “Barco Negro” (Black Boat). That version plays on stereotypical images of a boat at sea to describe love at a distance and bears none of the original political content. Puta da Silva does not resurrect the original melody but retells the original story of the brutalization of the Black worker while the Black mother raises the White child, ending in the repeated chant “Black, black, black, yes! Black, black, black, I am!” While much of the performance emphasises her Black and immigrant identities, in some songs she highlights her trans identity and her experience in

sex work, advising the audience to “Hear the steps of the tranny ... coming from all sides. She owns herself, what is yours will be hers.”

Certainly, without naming Bolsonaro or the Brazilian government, Puta da Silva and all that she celebrates represent a critique of the values and identities for which the Brazilian right wing stands through her very claim to existence. But, unlike Colombina’s performance, this critique was not only directed at Brazilian politics and society. At the end of the entire performance, Puta da Silva sings aggressively “I’m fake,” and then she then abruptly turns and changes her voice to a formal tone and says: “Thank you so much to this great house for the invitation.” Then she turns again to her aggressive tone, “Because of a man who crossed my life, I’m fake.” Then again she shifts to a tone of gratitude: “Thank you Prime Minister for remembering this important date for Brazil.” Then she finishes the performance with another “I’m fake” and leaves the stage.

Nascimento explains the intent: “We are thanking you for receiving us in your house, but it is a fake thanks. We are watching you. We know what the difficulties are to get documents, to live in the street, to be accepted. In this context, the performance is the cry of the excluded.” Indeed, the stories Puta da Silva recounts in the Prime Minister’s residence are stories generally of her experience in Portugal, not in Brazil. Nascimento understands the broader event as an intentional provocation toward the Brazilian government, “but,” he notes, “the venom was spilled everywhere, including on the Prime Minister himself. I think he didn’t imagine that this provocation of the Brazilian government would also stain the Portuguese government.” For Puta da Silva, this celebration of immigration, a bold move in contrast to the Portuguese right’s xenophobic discourses, could not be made without a critique of the current regime that manages an immigration system that leaves so many in precarious circumstances and a society that remains in many respects racist, sexist, transphobic, and xenophobic. Puta da Silva took the opportunity to musically, and personally, recount this reality to the Portuguese Prime Minister.

### **AFFECTIVE ASPIRATIONS OF ACTIVIST MUSICAL DIPLOMACY**

In this article, I have suggested that Costa’s Bicentennial celebration constituted an act of musical diplomacy between two countries with more than five hundred years of colonial and postcolonial history. Music set the stage for the Prime Minister to address the Brazilian community in Portugal, as well as the Brazilian government as represented by the ambassador. These are the trappings of diplomacy.

Though the discursive framework embraced in Costa’s speeches was “diplomatic” and did not directly criticise the Brazilian government, it created a space where such criticisms were made affectively through musical performance, manifesting an activist and aspirational musical diplomacy. These criticisms were sometime subtle, sometimes explicit, and sometimes made in simply allowing the appearance and articulation of marginalised bodies and voices in this official space, representing a Brazil that is



wholly other than that of Bolsonaro's vision. As Azevedo reflected, "to speak decently being Brazilian is already a response to the indecency of Bolsonarismo.... Basic values seem radical in this context." Nascimento further related, "While Bolsonaro wanted the heart of Dom Pedro, that crazy patriotic stuff, Costa brings something else. He shows another Brazil that is here, Afrodescendent, majority female.... These are not immigrants here reproducing bossa nova. They are immigrants with a cry in their throat. And this cry is creative, provocative, and against what is happening." Even if the event was meant to be relatively neutral and "diplomatic," as the Office of Events had explicitly requested it not be a protest, it ended up being a manifestation of the viewpoints of the Brazilian left. The few who came to the event dressed in green and yellow, representing the Brazilian right, quickly understood this and left.

Can a protest be understood as diplomatic? As Richard Arndt writes, "cultural *diplomacy* ... can only be said to take place when formal diplomats, serving national governments, try to shape and channel this natural flow to advance national interests" (2005:xviii). Certainly a more classical example of diplomacy is represented by the more "diplomatic" Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa neutrally attending the Bicentennial in Brazil and facilitating the voyage of Dom Pedro's heart to Brazil and back, regardless of who occupied the government. The Portuguese Prime Minister's actions appear all the more radical in this context. If the event truly was diplomatic, what and whose interests were advanced by creating a space for the expression of such critical reflections not only on the Brazilian government at the time, but the Portuguese as well?

In understanding strategy and interest, again we have the challenge of knowing motivations beyond CBL's. While it is clear the Office of Events did not want to throw a Bolsonarista party and therefore avoided the embassy, it is not clear they aimed at an event that would be this political—indeed, we know they preferred that the event *not* be a protest. It is further unclear how much they were acting in accordance with Costa's desires or whether Costa simply showed up for one of many events in his busy schedule planned by his Office of Events. Yet, they knew what they were getting into at the point they were selecting artists from the list provided by CBL.

Regardless of intent, the *impact* was of the Prime Minister of Portugal being viewed as denouncing Bolsonaro and supporting Lula. Costa unabashedly embraced a proimmigrant narrative and staked out a position distinct from the far right. We can see him making common cause with the Brazilian left, an important demographic profile in this third wave of immigration, and perhaps attempting to enlarge his coalition by playing to an emerging base. (Note that those highlighted in this article, Samara Azevedo of CBL, Andréa Freire of Colombina Clandestina, and Waquila da Silva and Claudio Nascimento of Puta da Silva, all came to Portugal to pursue graduate education in the arts and are representative of an increasingly educated migrant demographic.) These are not necessarily national interests, but they are political and even party interests that represent a more politicised, and I have suggested activist, diplomacy than that advanced by the Portuguese President.

What interests were advanced for the artists? Besides getting paid, the event generated notoriety and credibility for their artistic careers. Nascimento described the

impact of performing for the Prime Minister in further launching Puta da Silva into festival circuits and other important spotlights. For many of the artists, by explicitly disobeying the request for no protest, they advanced their political interests by using the space to position themselves in relation to the election but also to broader forces of oppression, including sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia, thus aspiring to an alternative Brazil.

We can also see the artists' embracing a strategy of exercising leverage on their own behalf. Andréa Freire of Colômbina Clandestina recounts speaking to Costa after the event, thanking him for the opportunity to play there but shifting the conversation to her own concerns as the representative of a carnival bloco that receives no support from the city to make their massive event happen and is required to pay all the costs of security and hygiene. Playing again on the opposition of house and street, she describes telling him, "I am very thankful for having been invited to your house, but I want to play in the street. If there is someone who can help me with this, it's you." Showing me a photograph on her phone, reproduced below, she muses, "Look at my sceptical face" (Figure 11).

Returning to Costa, we could also view the event as *antidiplomatic*, that is, as clearly not accomplishing diplomatic goals. While two-thirds of eligible Brazilian voters in Portugal would vote for Lula, a sizeable third of the Brazilian migrant community, some of whom have considerable wealth, would vote for Bolsonaro and would reasonably feel overlooked by Costa. Clearly, the event was antidiplomatic in terms of the Portuguese government's relationship with the government at that moment of Brazil, and a win by Bolsonaro was never out of the question, making the endeavour a risky diplomatic move.

However, perhaps we can simply see the event less calculatedly and simply as a genuine expression of Costa's politics. Samara Azevedo recounts speaking to Costa at the end of the Bicentennial event: "He was happy, and he flashed an 'L'," she indicated making an "L" for Lula with her fingers. "We kind of didn't understand, like, did I really see what I saw? And then he did it again, but there was no more media around." What was said only musically and affectively at the Bicentennial and left unsaid in Costa's political discourse would be put into words shortly before the final round of the election when he officially declared support for Lula, stating "Lula, count on me" (Lusa e Público 2022). It is in this sense that we can see his Bicentennial, in its oblique embrace of Lula's campaign, as an act of aspirational diplomacy. This was a diplomacy for a future government, then unguaranteed but that almost everyone in attendance hoped would come into existence, part of a campaign for that government. In this sense, the affects of music enabled participants to "experience a world that does not yet exist" (Steingo 2016:107).

Indeed, after having won the election on 30 October, Lula visited Portugal as President-Elect in mid-November. In a newspaper article entitled "Costa and Lula turn the page and recuperate diplomatic goals in common," the two are pictured holding hands in front of their respective flags (Figure 12). Costa is quoted as saying "the world missed Brazil and needs Brazil to return to the defence of democratic values... Portugal missed Brazil, and I, personally, missed President Lula a lot," admitted Costa after four years of difficult diplomatic relations with Brasília" (Santiago 2022). On the occasion of Lula's first



Figure 11. Andréa Freire of Colombina speaking to Costa. Photo by Nuno Lima, 10 September 2022.

trip to Portugal, he also spoke at an event in a university where he valorised the importance of education. In attendance were the representatives of CBL and Andorinha, including Samara Azevedo, as well as representatives of the various groups who had played at the Bicentennial, their invitation being a direct result of their participation in the celebration. On the occasion of the 25 April commemorations in 2023 of the 1974 Portuguese revolution against the dictatorship, Lula returned as President and spoke to the Portuguese parliament. The day before, he had attended the award ceremony of Lusophone countries' prestigious literary Camões Prize to Chico Buarque at the Queluz Palace outside Lisbon,



Figure 12. Image of Lula and Costa, source Público (photo by Manuel de Almeida; source: [https://www.publico.pt/2022/11/18/politica/noticia/costa-lula-viram-pagina-recuperam-eixos-diplomacia-comum-2028387?utm\\_source=copy\\_paste](https://www.publico.pt/2022/11/18/politica/noticia/costa-lula-viram-pagina-recuperam-eixos-diplomacia-comum-2028387?utm_source=copy_paste); accessed 7 July 2023).

notably the birth and death place of Dom Pedro. Because Bolsonaro had refused to approve Buarque's prize in 2019, the event had been delayed until Lula could ratify it. Proclaiming that the event represented a victory of democracy, he declared that "today is already another day" (Coutinho 2023). The statement was an homage to the first line of Buarque's "Apesar de Você" (In Spite of You) that dreamed of an end to dictatorship: "Tomorrow will be another day," which Colombina had sung at the Bicentennial. It constituted an announcement of the fulfilment of the song's aspirations, as well as a reconstitution of Luso-Brazilian relations and lusofonia. Even Freire's cause of gaining official support for street carnival was advanced when Lula's new Minister of Culture Margareth Menezes acted as mediator between Brazilian musicians, including carnival musicians, and the Portuguese government in a meeting at CBL in August 2023.

Though all these outcomes were but aspirations at the time of the Bicentennial, partnerships were forged through this event that ended up being quite strategic for current Luso-Brazilian relations, not through neutrally trying to please whoever is in power, but in staking out a political position. Meanwhile, Bolsonaro was invited to Portugal in May 2023 to attend an event at the invitation of Portugal's extreme right party Chega, though his visit was impeded by the current Brazilian government. In light of recent diplomatic missions of the US Republican party to Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and other right-wing leaders, we might think of international diplomacy as increasingly driven

by transnational party interests rather than a more apolitical state-to-state model and interpret Costa's Bicentennial in this context as well.

Reflecting on all this, Azevedo described a certain privilege as a migrant in being able to "create our bubbles" where these political positions can be safely announced, away from what she describes as necessarily "living among fascist communities" if she were in Brazil. She recounts that "in 2017 and 2018, people wanted to get out of the bubble" to speak to the other side and convince them through discourse. As she witnessed the limits of rational discourse to change minds over the years of Bolsonaro's government, her thoughts had changed and reflect the potential power of what I have referred to as the affective powers of this activist, aspirational musical diplomacy at Costa's celebration of the Bicentennial of Brazilian Independence:

We need to strengthen this bubble. The bigger it gets the more people will come and attach themselves to it. People can be saved, but some will only be saved in the next lifetime.... Others voted for Bolsonaro but were deceived and we can try to approach them, but we often try through political discourse, calling them fascists ... while the evangelical churches are calling them brothers and sisters.... So I believe art can have the role of making this bubble more porous, more capable of including more people.

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